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Twenty-first special session

VERBATIM RECORD OF THE SIXTEEN HUNDRED AND NINETIETH MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Thursday, 19 December 1991, at 10.45 a.m.

President: Mr. RICHARDSON (United Kingdom)

- Opening of the twenty-first special session
- Adoption of the agenda
- Report of the Secretary-General on credentials
- Letter dated 21 October 1991 from the Alternate Representative for Special Political Affairs of the United States of America to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General, following up on her Government's invitation to the Trusteeship Council to send a visiting mission to facilitate a better understanding of economic and social conditions in Palau and requesting that a special session of the Council be convened at the earliest possible date to consider the dispatch of such a mission

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- Examination of petitions related to item 3 of the agenda

- Report of the Trusteeship Council covering the twenty-first special session

- Closure of the twenty-first special session

The meeting was called to order at 10.45 a.m.

OPENING OF THE TWENTY-FIRST SPECIAL SESSION

The PRESIDENT: I declare open the twenty-first special session of the Trusteeship Council.

As Council members are aware, this special session has been convened at the request of the United States of America to consider the dispatch of a visiting mission to the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands to facilitate a better understanding of economic and social conditions in Palau.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA (T/1961)

The PRESIDENT: I should like to draw the attention of members of the Council to the provisional agenda contained in document T/1961.

If I hear no comments, I shall consider that the agenda of the twenty-first special session is adopted.

The agenda was adopted.

REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL ON CREDENTIALS

The PRESIDENT: I should like to inform members of the Council that the Secretary-General still has not received the credentials of all members of the Council. I would therefore suggest that formal credentials required pursuant to rule 14 of the rules of procedure of the Trusteeship Council be submitted to the Secretary-General as soon as possible by the States that have not already done so. The Council will take up this item at its regular fifty-ninth session and consider the report of the Secretary-General on credentials relating to the twenty-first special session.

If there are no objections, it will be so decided.

It was so decided.

LETTER DATED 21 OCTOBER 1991 FROM THE ALTERNATE REPRESENTATIVE FOR SPECIAL POLITICAL AFFAIRS OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (T/1960), FOLLOWING UP ON HER GOVERNMENT'S INVITATION TO THE TRUSTEESHIP COUNCIL TO SEND A VISITING MISSION TO FACILITATE A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL CONDITIONS IN PALAU AND REQUESTING THAT A SPECIAL SESSION OF THE COUNCIL BE CONVENED AT THE EARLIEST POSSIBLE DATE TO CONSIDER THE DISPATCH OF SUCH A MISSION

The PRESIDENT: I now call on the representative of the United States, the Administering Authority.

Mr. CASTRO (United States of America): My delegation is, of course, extremely grateful to you, Sir, for arranging this session at such short notice. I also marvel at the fine work done by the Secretary of the Trusteeship Council, Mr. De Souza, and the Secretariat staff in preparing the groundwork for and looking after the details of this special session in such a thorough manner.

I wish to convey the greetings to you, Sir, and to the members of the Trusteeship Council of Ambassador Tahir-Kheli, the United States representative to the Trusteeship Council, who was unable to attend this morning's session.

(Mr. Castro, United States)

I should also like to express my delegation's appreciation to the members of the Trusteeship Council for agreeing unanimously to convene this special session of the Council to follow up on my Government's invitation to the Council to send a visiting mission to Palau.

Members of the Trusteeship Council will recall the statements made by representatives of the Government of Palau, who welcomed a visiting mission to Palau and in particular extended a warm invitation to representatives of the People's Republic of China and the Soviet Union to be a part of the mission. As we stated in our letter of 21 October to the Secretary-General, the United States also welcomes a visiting mission to Palau in order to facilitate a better understanding of economic and social conditions there. We wish to reiterate the words of Assistant Secretary Stella Guerra of the Department of the Interior, who, in her closing statement to the Trusteeship Council on 9 May, emphasized that

> "It is through such first-hand experience that a true understanding of the economic and social achievements in the islands can be fully appreciated. A visiting mission would be given full access to all parts of the Territory." (T/PV.1687, p. 28)

As we made clear in our opening and closing statements at the Trusteeship Council meeting in May, the United States believes that Palau should identify at an early date the political status which it wishes to have, as the other parts of the Trusteeship of the Pacific Islands have already done. After 44 years, the Trusteeship has served the purpose of developing Palauan institutions to the point where Palau is in a position to assume responsibility for its own future.

(Mr. Castro, United States)

Our expressed preference has been for free association, and it was for that reason that we negotiated the Compact in the late 1970s and early 1980s. We continue to support that solution as the one which would serve Palau's long-term interests well. In pursuit of this goal, and at Palau's request, the United States agreed in 1989 to modify the Compact in certain important ways. Since the May meeting of the Council we have held additional discussions with Palau to identify problems which the leadership perceives and to find equitable solutions.

But it may be that free association is not the route which Palau wishes to take. Seven failed attempts to ratify the Compact may be evidence that this is the case. If so, then we would encourage Palau to consider the independence option. Independence would not come precipitately, but only after conditions had been agreed upon and after careful preparations. The Council has presided over the transition of many former Trust Territories to independent status. Palau could well join this list of States which have gained independence after a period of Trusteeship.

In any event, we wish to make it clear that the indefinite continuation of the Trusteeship is not an option. Trusteeship was intended as a temporary status; it has outlived its intended life span and should now be replaced by a more permanent arrangement. The United States has met its obligation under the terms of the Trusteeship Agreement to foster the development of self-government in Palau and to work towards a political status which would lead to termination of the trusteeship.

In order for the Council to prepare a report on the visiting mission in time for its fifty-ninth session in 1992, we suggest scheduling the visiting mission around 15 March 1992. Regarding the composition of the visiting mission, we note the Council's past practice of seeking the participation of

(Mr. Castro, United States)

representatives of other nations in the Pacific region, and we welcome the continuation of that practice in the case of this mission. In addition, as in the past and in accordance with past practice, the United States, as Administering Authority, will provide escort officers to accompany the mission.

If, as my delegation hopes, the Trusteeship Council decides to dispatch a visiting mission to Palau, the Administering Authority stands ready to extend its full cooperation.

Speaking on behalf of Ambassador Tahir-Kheli, as we shall not be meeting again until next year I should like to convey our best wishes to members of the Council and the Secretariat for a happy holiday season and a pleasant new year.

The PRESIDENT: If no member of the Council wishes to make a statement or put any question to the representative of the Administering Authority, we shall now take up draft resolution T/L.1279 concerning the question of the dispatch of a visiting mission to Palau, which I am proposing for consideration by the Council. In this connection, I should like to draw attention to document T/L.1280 relating to the financial implications of that draft resolution.

Draft resolution T/L.1279 was prepared according to the format of previous resolutions adopted by the Council on the dispatch of visiting missions, but I draw members' attention to the fact that the first preambular paragraph no longer refers to Trusteeship Council resolution 2183 (LIII), as was the case in resolution 2190 (S-XIX) of 17 March 1989, which decided the dispatch of the last regular visiting mission to Palau. The draft resolution before the Council on this occasion refers instead to Security Council

(The President)

resolution 683 (1990) of 22 December 1990, which is the most recent landmark resolution on the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands. The third paragraph of the preamble takes into account the suggestion made by several Member States of the Pacific region that representatives of countries of that region should be allowed to participate in the mission, and also takes account of the comments we have just heard from the representative of the United States.

Operative paragraphs 3, 4 and 5, which concern the terms of reference of the mission, are almost identical to those of resolutions adopted in the past by the Council in cases of regular visiting missions.

Operative paragraph 6 is the usual request to the Secretary-General to provide the necessary staff and facilities to assist the visiting mission in the performance of its functions.

I should, however, draw attention to operative paragraph 2. Following consultations which were held before this meeting, under the current text of that paragraph the Council would decide

> "that the composition of the Mission, including two representatives of countries of the region, should be determined through further consultations".

As we are all aware, this is - and I am delighted to be able to say so - the first occasion on which all four members of the Trusteeship Council, other than the Administering Authority itself, are ready and prepared to send representatives on a visiting mission, and it is felt that the wording should be adjusted to take account of this development. Therefore, with members' permission, I propose the following oral amendment to operative paragraph 2, which will of course be translated into the relevant official languages subsequently. Paragraph 2 would now read:

(The President)

"Further decides that the visiting mission to Palau should be composed of four members of the Trusteeship Council (China, France, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and the United Kingdom) and two members of the countries of the region that are not members of the Council, to be determined through further consultations".

(The President)

The footnote to the existing operative paragraph 2 would remain in the amended text.

Since there appear to be no comments by members of the Council to the draft resolution as I have just orally amended it, it is my understanding that the Council is in agreement to waive rule 57 of tne rules of procedure, which specifies that draft resolutions should be circulated to members 24 hours in advance of the meeting at which they are to be considered. If there are no objections, I shall take it that it is so decided.

It was so decided.

The PRESIDENT: If there are no comments on the draft resolution, I suggest that the Council proceed to take action on the draft resolution in document T/L.1279, as orally amended.

Can I take it that the Council is prepared to adopt the draft resolution without a vote?

The draft resolution was adopted.

The PRESIDENT: Members will note that by the resolution just adopted the Council decided, inter alia, that the composition of the two representatives of countries of the region would be determined through further consultations.

If there are no further comments, we shall continue our informal consultations on this issue, and I should perhaps say now that I intend to resume those consultations at a reasonably early stage in the new year.

Following past practice, I suggest that the Council decide that the names of the persons to be submitted by the Governments concerned would automatically be approved when received.

(The President)

May I take it that members agree to that suggestion?

It was so decided.

The PRESIDENT: Furthermore, I should like to propose that the Council take note of the statement made by the representative of the United States that the Administering Authority, in accordance with established practice, would provide escort officers to the mission. If I hear no further comments, I shall take it that it is so decided.

It was so decided.

EXAMINATION OF PETITIONS RELATED TO ITEM 3 OF THE AGENDA

The PRESIDENT: I understand that the Council has not received any petitions relating to agenda item 3. In the absence of such petitions, I suggest that the Council simply take note of that fact.

It was so decided.

REPORT OF THE TRUSTEESHIP COUNCIL COVERING THE TWENTY-FIRST SPECIAL SESSION

The PRESIDENT: The Council has now concluded its work, and, if I hear no objections, I propose that the Council authorize the Secretariat, in consultation with the President and members of the Council, to prepare a report on the work of the twenty-first special session and to include it in the next annual report of the Trusteeship Council on its activities during the fifty-ninth regular session. That is expected to take place during the month of May 1992.

If I hear no comments or objections, I shall take it that it is so decided.

It was so decided.

CLOSURE OF THE TWENTY-FIRST SPECIAL SESSION

The PRESIDENT: The Council has thus concluded its consideration of the items on its agenda for this twenty-first special session. I should like to take this opportunity to thank you all and to express my gratitude to the Secretariat and to all others concerned for the help they have extended to me on quite short notice in the preparation of the twenty-first special session. Thank you all very much.

I declare closed the twenty-first special session of the Trusteeship Council.

The meeting rose at 11.05 a.m.